



## T.V. Paul

### T.V. Paul

*James McGill Professor of International Relations*



### "Balancing Under Near Unipolarity: American Power and the New Balance of Power Dynamics"

**Monday, April 18, 2005  
12:00 p.m.  
Mershon Center  
Room 120**



**T . V. PAUL** is James McGill Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, where he has been teaching since 1991. Paul specializes and teaches courses in international relations, especially international security, international conflict & conflict resolution, regional security and South Asia. He received his undergraduate education in India, and MA and Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Los Angeles. Paul has published 8 books. He is the author of the books: *India in the World Order: Searching for Major Power Status* (Cambridge University Press, 2002, with B. Nayar); *Power versus Prudence: Why Nations Forgo Nuclear Weapons* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); and *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Paul is the editor of the volume, *The India-Pakistan Dispute: An Enduring Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming, 2005); and co-editor and contributor to the volumes: *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21 st Century* (with J. Wirtz and M. Fortman, Stanford University Press, 2004); *The Nation-State in Question* (with G. John Ikenberry and John A. Hall, Princeton University Press, 2003); *International Order and the Future of World Politics* (with John A. Hall, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 2000 (twice), 2001, 2002 & 2003); and *The Absolute Weapon Revisited: Nuclear Arms and the Emerging International Order* (with Richard Harknett and James Wirtz, The University of Michigan Press, 1998 & 2000).

Paul has published nearly 30 journal articles and book chapters and has lectured at universities and research institutions internationally. Paul's book , *Power versus Prudence* was selected as an ' Outstanding Academic Title for 2001' by the *Choice Magazine* and as a "Book for Understanding' by the *American Association of University Presses* . He has been a Visiting Professor of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California (2002-03), Visiting Scholar at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs (CFIA) and the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies (1997-98), and a Visiting Affiliate at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey (2002-2003). During 2000-2002 he served as the Director of the University of Montreal-McGill

Research Group in International Security (REGIS). He is currently working on the book projects: *The Tradition of Non-use: Nuclear Taboo in World Politics*; and *Globalization and the Changing National Security State*.

#### Synopsis:

T.V. Paul's visit to the Mershon Center allowed a preview of work that is forthcoming in a special issue of *International Security*, and is part of a larger book project, *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (co-edited with James J. Wirtz and

Michel Fortmann). The work seeks to answer a couple of questions fundamental to the study of international security: is the balance of power historically unique? Is balancing possible in contemporary period given the imbalance of material capabilities (i.e., US preponderance). If so, how?

Paul said that balance of power politics is possible in contemporary world politics, but that balancing may take different forms, like soft balancing than in past periods, where hard balancing was the norm, due both to the drastic material imbalance enjoyed by the United States, and to characteristics unique to US unipolarity.

Paul said that to explore this shift, it is necessary to analyze US unipolarity. He said that theories that explain the lack of balancing behavior vis-à-vis the United States are inadequate – *liberal* theorists surmise that economic interdependence and globalization prohibit balancing; structural realists who attribute it to arms buildups and alliance formation. Both are inadequate for Paul because, those attributing the lack of balancing to economic interdependence and globalization incorrectly privilege economics concerns over security concerns; security concerns, he maintained, are paramount, trumping economic concerns. Paul added that structural realist arguments, which suggest that balances tend to recur in the face of an imbalance of material capabilities, do not adequately explain the lack of balancing because they are indeterminate with respect to the timing of balancing behavior while concomitantly assuming that hard balancing occurs automatically given unbalanced power. Paul believed that balancing is not automatic, but manual.

Since he thought balancing to be manual rather than automatic process, he wanted to know what primary characteristics of US unipolarity were causing the lack of hard balancing by secondary great powers. He maintained that the lack of balancing by secondary great power is a result of three things: other states not fearing the loss of their sovereign authority to the United States; the United States not interfering in secessionist movements (such as those in China, Russia, and India); and their perception of the United States as a status quo power. These are important, Paul noted, because they do not produce the two necessary conditions for hard balancing: the perception that there is a rising revisionist power, and that there are allies available with which to form a countervailing coalition. Because these conditions do not exist, there has been no evidence of hard balancing.

Rather, Paul claimed what we are witnessing is a period of soft balancing: institutional strategies and diplomatic summits meant to constrain and de-legitimize the policies of a preponderant United States. Soft balancing, he noted, is more likely than hard balancing when the unipolar power, provides a significant number of public goods, possesses preponderant military capabilities, and is perceived to be a constrained hegemon, as is the current situation with the United States.

Paul noted that the United States faced considerable opposition from China and Russia regarding the decision to intervene in Kosovo in 1999, as they used their institutional power within the United Nations to de-legitimate US actions. More recently, Paul said, the United States, was constrained in its actions in the Iraq war by actions taken in the United Nations by France, Germany, and Russia (i.e., threatening to veto security council resolutions), and by the climate of popular world opinion which de-legitimated US unilateralist policies. In short, Paul contended that soft balancing bound the United States with institutions and norms, thereby constraining the possible policies available to it.

Paul concluded that, given the characteristics of US unipolarity, states are forced to rely on new strategies – institutional strategies and diplomatic summits – to balance the preponderant power of the United States. However, he cautioned that if the policies of the United States in the war on terror come to be perceived as revisionist, hard balancing would be a more likely outcome in the future.